

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 20740-20740

Title: FORCE RECONNAISSANCE ROLES AND MISSIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE MEU(SOC) PROGRAM

Operation/Exercise Name: WESTPAC 98

Observed: 10 Dec 1998

Originator: 1ST FORCE RECON

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5. (U) OBSERVATION:

Due to the current structure of MEU(SOC) pre-deployment training program, the MEU's Force Reconnaissance (FORCON) Platoon is not able to demonstrate all of it's organic capabilities in support of all potential MEU mission taskings.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

The current MEF directed SOTG training program directs the FORCON Platoon to become proficient in Close Quarters Battle (CQB) and Applied Explosives in order to support the Direct Action portion of the MEU (SOC) qualification. Once the Platoon completes eight weeks of SOTG directed training it becomes the heart of the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF). Over the next four to five months before the deployment the FORCON Platoon trains exclusively for DA and Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO) operations. During this same time other elements of the MEU are also training for their designated tactical specialties such as TRAP and NEO. The FORCON Platoon was not able to take part in any other MEU training except DA and MIO. During the deployment, 15th MEU planned for a number of real world contingencies in Kenya, Eritrea and Kuwait. During the planning process for these potential missions the FORCON Platoon Commander presented the Platoon's capabilities to the various leadership cells in the MEU in an attempt to provide high quality support to the designated supported commander, usually the BLT. This was usually met with resistance based on the fact the Platoon had not trained for missions such as TRAP and NEO during the pre-deployment training cycle.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

Under the current structure of the MEU (SOC) pre-deployment training cycle, the FORCON Platoon is unable to participate in MEU tactical training other than DA and MIO. The FORCON Platoon has organic tactical capabilities not found in any other unit in the MEU. These capabilities should be exploited by the MEU on a regular basis. The Platoon should not be kept in the DA/MIO "box" but be given the opportunity to provide high quality tactical support to a more wide variety of MEU operations.

The Platoon's pre-CHOP training plan is a year long and more advanced than any other unit in the MEU. The individual and collective skill, experience and maturity of the

Platoon far exceeds any other unit in the MEU. Since the FORCON Platoon was forced to train exclusively for the unlikely DA or MIO, the MEU's most experienced and qualified infantrymen were not routinely considered for the most likely missions such as TRAP or NEO.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Future MEU staffs should incorporate the FORCON Platoon into to as many tactical scenarios as possible during the pre-deployment cycle. For example, the TRAP mission. Only the FORCON Platoon has the experience and training to "search" for downed aircrew in enemy territory. In a situation like task Force Ranger faced in Mogadishu in 1993, only the FORCON Platoon would have expertise and equipment to extract aircrew, either mechanically or explosively, from a downed helicopter in a hostile urban environment.

It is recommended toe FORCON platoon be counted on for more than DA and MIO. It is realized all elements of the MEU should be given the opportunity to perform but it should not be at the expense of true tactical combat capability.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

In November, 1998, the MEU sent it's MSALT to the US Embassy in Kuwait. The MEU Commander elected to send a five man special security detachment from the FORCON Platoon. This team supported the MSALT Commander and the Regional Security Officer (RSO) by providing physical security expertise, High Risk Personal Protection/Personal Security Details, motorcade security, route reconnaissance, and communication support. Each FORCON Marine in the team was also a qualified surgical marksman capable of defeating a threat in highly restricted ROE environment. This demonstrates the effective use of the FORCON Platoon in a non traditional role by the MEU Commander.

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